

## Appendix A

### Leo Strauss's Notes on Averroes's Commentary on Plato's *Republic*

*Editorial remarks:* This text is an edited version of an untitled transcript of fourteen pages found in the Leo Strauss Papers.<sup>1</sup> There are two sets of corrections by hand on the transcript: some are by pencil and some by a blue pen. It seems that Strauss has corrected the transcript at least twice and has been preparing it for an unspecified later use. Strauss used E. I. J. Rosenthal's edition of Averroes's work and refers to the page numbers of his edition.<sup>2</sup> However, all translated passages from Hebrew are Strauss's own, not Rosenthal's. It is therefore tempting to date the transcript sometime after 1956, although there are no dates indicated on the papers. Numbers in curly brackets, inserted by the editor, refer to the page numbers of the transcript; numbers in square brackets, also inserted by the editor, refer to the paragraph numbers of the transcript; numbers in parenthesis are in the original transcript and refer to the page and line numbers of Rosenthal's edition; all handwritten and typed underlinings have been converted to italics; crossed out words and handwritten insertions are mentioned in the footnotes; arrow symbol, used for showing the logical consequence of ideas, is everywhere inserted by hand; Strauss's corrections of typographical errors have not been noted; the abbreviated title of the books and names are everywhere replaced by their full forms. The errors are responsibility of the editor.

<sup>1</sup> Leo Strauss Papers, box 18, folder 17, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

<sup>2</sup> Averroes, *Commentary on Plato's "Republic."* The page numbers of Rosenthal's edition are also indicated in the margins of Ralph Lerner's translation: Averroes, *On Plato's "Republic."*

{1} [1] How to approach Islamic (political) philosophy? a. not from a modern point of view b. not from the point of view of Christian scholasticism (e.g., assuming that Averroes is Islamic Thomas Aquinas). Islam[ic] philosophy seems to be a combination of Aristotle and Neo-Platonism (emanation of everything including matter from the One). But 1. Farabi's *The Philosophy of Plato* shows no trace of Neo-Platonism and is much closer to Cicero than to Plotinus 2. connected with this is the great importance of political philosophy, Platonic and not Aristotelian: obvious difference from Christian scholasticism; furthermore, no Roman law and<sup>3</sup> Cicero: no natural law tradition 3. connected with difference between Islam and Christianity? Avicenna on *Republic* and *Laws*: Plato's political science is the clue to the understanding of *sharia*, the prophet as philosopher-king (radically different from Aristotle's *Politics*) cf. Farabi, *Ihsa' al-'ulum* on *fiqh* and *Kalam* as appendages to political science.

[2] Sketch of the prophetology of the Falāsifa according to Maimonides: a strictly natural process – intellect and imagination – *the* difficulty: how only one perfect *sharia* (given the eternity of the universe)?<sup>4</sup>

[3] Averroes on the *Republic*. How to read it? Not on the assumption that Averroes did not have access to the *Republic* but only to some summary. Averroes says that he paraphrased the *Republic* because he didn't have access to the *Politics*; this implies that he did have access to the *Republic*, of course only an Arabic translation. That translation is not accessible to us; we cannot know how good or bad it was; but we have no right to assume that it was bad or unintelligible. We can judge it to be unintelligible only with {2} a view to *our* understanding of the *Republic*; do *we* understand the *Republic*? cf. Farabi's *The Philosophy of Plato* on Thrasymachus.

[4] Besides, even if there can be no question that Averroes presents Plato in a manner which differs entirely from anything Plato says or suggests, this need not be due to incomprehension on his part or on the part of the translator of the *Republic*. The example of Farabi on *Laws* VII: the problem of *Islam* → Averroes too may *use* Plato, he may hide behind Plato, for presenting unorthodox views of the *sharia*.

[5] Summary: before we can make a comparison of the *Republic* and Averroes's paraphrase, one must have understood that paraphrase by itself.

<sup>3</sup> "in" is crossed out and "and" inserted by hand.

<sup>4</sup> "?" inserted by hand.

[6] The problem: *Republic* → al-madīna al-fadīla – the perfect community – communism, equality of the sexes, rule of philosophers; the consequence: Islam is not the perfect community. But perhaps Averroes does not identify himself with Plato: why then did he paraphrase the *Republic*?

[7] In his introduction (21, 5 → 21, 3–25, 9) Averroes sets forth what he regards as the truth as to practical science. Practical science in contradistinction to theoretical science (natural science and divine science) (21, 8–13). Practical science consists of two parts: the scientific and the practical part. Scientific part: the virtues (and vices) simply; practical part: how the virtues are to be established in the young, etc. – the latter requires understanding of the *political ends* of the virtues (21, 21–22, 2; 24, 12–32). (cf. Aristotle's silence in his *Ethics* on the end which courage serves). Both parts of practical science are still theoretical as compared with that knowledge which is required for treating individual cases; for this requires {3} power of judgment which arises from long experience (25, 2–8).

[8] First part of practical sciences: *Nicomachean Ethics* Second part: *Politics* and Plato's *Republic* Averroes will explain Plato's *Republic* because the *Politics* "has not yet come to us." (22, 3–5).

[9] Averroes uses then the *Republic* only for the second part of the theoretic part of practical science. But before he turns to this subject, he gives a summary of the first part of practical science; in that survey he uses, and even explicitly refers to (22, 27 and 23, 31), Plato's *Republic* → the *Republic* contains the two parts of practical science, but Averroes uses it chiefly for the second part. Averroes identifies himself with the first part of practical science as developed within the *Republic* at least to the extent to which he summarizes it (cf. 65, 8–9 and context regarding the whole section up to 74, 14: the teaching of the first part of practical science is not based<sup>5</sup> on Plato). By all this we are led to expect that he regards the practical science as developed in the *Republic* as the true teaching. This would imply a complete break with Islam.

[10] Averroes reassures us at the beginning of the discussion of the second part of political science, i.e., at the beginning of the theme of his work. "We say that the beginning with which Plato opened the speech about the emergence of those virtues (i.e., the citizen's virtues) is the virtue of courage." He makes clear immediately afterward that he will

<sup>5</sup> "best" is crossed out and "based" inserted by hand.

speak first in his own name before permitting Plato to speak: “as *we* have said, the way to the understanding of how it (the virtue of courage) is attained by the citizens and preserved with respect to them in the most perfect manner is that *we* should contemplate what is primarily intended by the actions of this virtue in the<sup>6</sup> city. {4} We say then<sup>7</sup> ...” (25, 10–19). He then goes on to present the true teaching regarding the function of courage without ever mentioning Plato. At the end of that presentation he says: “this is what Aristotle holds about the wars of the virtuous city according to the report of Farabi. But what we find about this subject in Plato’s book ...” It appears that Plato’s teaching regarding the wars of the virtuous city and therewith about the function of the virtue of courage is not simply true (26, 26ff). Averroes does not simply agree with the teaching of the *Republic*.

[11] What is the issue? There are two ways in which the vulgar (≠<sup>8</sup> the elite) can acquire speculative opinions, opinions about matters of speculation, i.e., about the first principle of the whole and the end (25, 24): 1. rhetorical and poetic speeches and, 2. compulsion. The first is applicable generally speaking to people who have been trained in these things from their youth on or to citizens of the virtuous city. The second is to be applied to “the rest of the nations,” to the barbarians. The virtuous city – “the city which we describe in speech” (26, 12–13) – makes little use of the second way<sup>9</sup>, chiefly in regard to foreign nations. Compulsion → war → virtue of courage.

[12] That Averroes makes these remarks as a Moslem appears from the following statement: “this is the state of things in the *sharia* which go in the direction of the human shariai<sup>10</sup> in this our divine *sharia*, for the ways in it (sc. in our divine law) which lead to God are two: one of them is by *speech* and the other is by war.” (26, 16–18). To understand this remark, one has to consider that the true way to “speculative opinion” is demonstration (25, 17–18), demonstrative speech: by saying that our divine law leads to God “by speech” and both by rhetorical or poetic speech<sup>11</sup> Averroes leaves it open that {5} Islam leads the elite to the speculative truth by means of demonstration. Secondly, the quoted statement

<sup>6</sup> “this” is crossed out and “the” inserted by hand.

<sup>7</sup> “them” is crossed out and “then” inserted by hand.

<sup>8</sup> “≠” is inserted by hand.

<sup>9</sup> “way” is inserted by hand.

<sup>10</sup> Strauss translates *torot* (the plural of *torah*) as “shariai” to remind us of the Arabic term Averroes presumably used in the original.

<sup>11</sup> “and both by rhetorical or poetic speech” is inserted by hand.

implies that there are laws within the law which radically differ from all human laws. This leads to the consequence that the specifically divine ways leading men to God are not speech and war but silence and peaceful action (say, justice, alms giving ...) <sup>12</sup> and: practical science (i.e., philosophy) <sup>13</sup> is perhaps not able to understand those parts of the divine law which have no analogy in human law: only the lower part of the divine law is covered by the *Republic*.

[13] In his exposition of the truth regarding speech and war as the ways leading to God, Averroes does not mention Plato – by name. But he seems to refer to him in the following passage (25, 19–23): “in teaching wisdom to the vulgar he used the rhetorical and poetic ways. For they (i.e., the vulgar) are in this respect exposed to this alternative: either they know them (i.e., the speculative opinions) by demonstrative speeches or they do not know them at all. The first is impossible. The second is possible. For it is proper for every man to acquire the maximum of human perfection which his nature permits and for which he is prepared.” It is not certain that Averroes means here Plato – cf. 26, 1 תשע <sup>14</sup> which may be punctuated in different ways. Apart from this the statement is very strange: <sup>15</sup> it is impossible for the vulgar to know the speculative truth by demonstrations, and it is possible for the vulgar not to know the speculative truth at all; the latter alternative is in perfect agreement with the nature of the vulgar. The conclusion: knowledge of the speculative truth by rhetorical and poetic argument is in fact ignorance of the speculative truth. It certainly is not knowledge but belief which is effected by {6} rhetorical and poetical arguments, and belief appears to be a moral virtue rather than an intellectual virtue (25, 24–26). No other conclusion could be drawn from the premise that the true ways to speculative science are a preserve of the elite (25, 17–18). The passage which contains an *allusion* to Plato, suggests that belief has no cognitive dignity whatever.

[14] Averroes questions in our context not what Plato says about speech – demonstrative or poetic – rhetorical – as a way of bringing men to God. *Averroes on Plato's error* (26, 26–27, 23) <sup>16</sup>. According to Plato war and the art of war and hence courage are needed only because of necessity: Plato implicitly or explicitly rejects the war of civilization and

<sup>12</sup> “)” is inserted by hand.

<sup>13</sup> Two parentheses inserted by hand.

<sup>14</sup> “תשע” is inserted by hand.

<sup>15</sup> “and” is crossed out.

<sup>16</sup> “27–28” is crossed out and “26–27” inserted by hand.

the holy war. He apparently thought that only Greeks are by nature fit for wisdom (hence wisdom could not be spread to other nations by war). Yet, Averroes says, granting that the Greeks are most gifted, the men of Andalus, Syria, Iraq, Egypt are gifted too. (He does not speak of the inhabitants of Arabia – see Ibn Ḥaldūn). Furthermore, even if one accepts Plato's premise (regarding the uniqueness of the Greeks) one could *perhaps* say that the nations other than the Greeks are particularly gifted for virtues other than the intellectual (and therefore that they may be subjected by conquest to discipline in those virtues). Yet here the important question arises as to whether the highest development of the other virtues does not depend on the corresponding development of wisdom. Still, many nations, especially in the two moderate climes, the 5th and the 4th, are fit for the other virtues. It seems that one could argue as follows: proficiency in those other virtues depends on education from early childhood on; hence coercion by war comes too late. But it does not come too late {7} for the small children of the nations concerned. Even the older generation of nations which have been brought up in a regime close to the virtuous regime can attain to the virtues *to some extent*. If in a given case this is not possible, the people concerned must be killed or else enslaved, i.e., treated like irrational animals.

[15] I conclude: Averroes makes the war of civilization dependent on natural conditions (whilst the holy war may have to be waged against<sup>17</sup> the reds and the blacks) – and: in many cases not *conversion* to the true religion but treating the conquered like irrational animals.

[16] Above all, Averroes argues on the premise that the purpose of the war of civilization is to spread wisdom.

[17] *Later discussion of compulsion and war*

[18] 1. Plato's guardians must punish such a guardian as is unwilling to accept the Law (41, 6–7; cf. also the reference to the *sharia* in Plato's perfect city: 44, 23). [i.e., Plato did not believe that *wisdom* could be brought about by compulsion but adherence to the *sharia* could; this means that for Plato wisdom is radically different from the *sharia* whereas Averroes maintains that wisdom and the *sharia* coincide and hence the holy war is legitimate, if qualified by the *natural* condition of wisdom].

[19] 2. Discussion of the size of the good city. That size, Averroes, holds depends on the circumstances (time, place, neighboring nations) and must be determined by political *judgment* which is distinguished from political science. Plato was satisfied {8} with 1000 warriors – rightly,

<sup>17</sup> “between” crossed out and “against” inserted by hand.

given the circumstances of his time. Yet *we* who assume that the virtuous city must wage war against *all* men, cannot accept that figure, as Plato himself would readily admit (45, 29–46, 12). Or, one might say, that the virtuous community would consist of many communities each of which possesses a determinate size. In that case one would have to draw the line between the member societies properly, e.g., according to the natural climes as the<sup>18</sup> Master of the *sharia* has said “I have been sent to the reds and to the blacks.” This is not indeed the opinion of Plato but that of Aristotle and it is undoubtedly the true opinion (46, 13–21). [Agreeing with Islam Averroes demands a *universal society* and therewith the war of civilization not limited to a part of mankind – i.e., he retracts the concession to Plato made before – on the other hand, he brings the *conflict* between Plato and Islam into the open – yet he prevents that conflict from becoming a conflict between Islam and *philosophy* by asserting that the view of the *sharia* is the view also of Aristotle.] He allegedly knows this view only through Farabi (cf. 26, 26–27); *where* does Farabi say this? and if Farabi says it, to what Aristotelian work does he refer? A genuine work of Aristotle? (cf. Pines on 46, 20).<sup>19</sup>

[20] 3. Plato's suggestions regarding limitations of warfare. The citizens must not enslave men of their kind and language. The may call enemies of this kind (their fellows in race and language) men in error but not unbelievers. This opinion of Plato is at variance with what many bringers of *torot* say (59, 20–60, 5). [Here Averroes merely *notes* the disagreement between Plato and many prophets; he does not say here what he thinks to be the truth; nor does he refer *here* to Aristotle's agreeing {9} with many prophets and disagreeing with Plato: *should racial and linguistic unity override religious diversity*? Conclusion: one of the great issues between philosophy and law is religious war, and this is connected with the problematic character of a *universal society*.]

[21] Canon of interpretation: Averroes is aware of the conflict between the *Republic* and the *torot*<sup>20</sup>; speaking of that conflict he takes the side of the *torot*<sup>21</sup>; but what about those cases in which the conflict between the *Republic* and the *torot*<sup>22</sup> is obvious and Averroes does not polemicize against Plato? What does it mean when Averroes says regarding religious

<sup>18</sup> “a” crossed out and “the” inserted by hand.

<sup>19</sup> Shlomo Pines, “Notes on Averroes' Political Philosophy,” *Iyyun: The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly* 8 (1957): 75.

<sup>20</sup> “Laws” is crossed out and “torot” inserted by hand.

<sup>21</sup> “Laws” is crossed out and “torot” inserted by hand.

<sup>22</sup> “Laws” is crossed out and “torot” inserted by hand.

war and universal society that the Islamic view is undoubtedly the truth? Averroes sheds some light on this when he discusses his next great theme: the education of the guardians by music or rather by poetic and rhetorical speeches. The question concerns the use of untruth, of untrue fables. He teaches in his own name that for the education of the young imitative presentation of both speculative and practical matters is required but the imitation must be true. The first principle and the second principles [i.e., God and the angels] must be represented by their analogues in the political principles [i.e., as rulers issuing commands]. True happiness must be represented by imaginary happiness (29, 27–30, 12) but the vulgar cannot help taking the representations as the truth and hence the vulgar is in fact led<sup>23</sup> toward the untruth.

[22] Averroes turns then to Plato. Plato disapproved of untrue tales or untrue imitations. Tacitly imitating the ambiguity of Plato, Averroes presents Plato as disapproving of tales which are untrue and base (30, 20–21), thus leaving room for noble lies. He then explicitly replaces Plato's discussion of untrue and base {10} tales which were famous in Plato's time by a discussion of such tales which are famous "with us"; he explicitly *follows* Plato in doing so. God must not be represented as the cause of good and evil; evil must be traced to a principle other than God, say, to demons; but this has other disadvantages; therefore, evil must be traced to a representation of matter such as darkness [i.e., no teaching of omnipotence] (30, 23–31, 6). Happiness must not be represented as *reward* for actions which are conducive to happiness nor misery as *punishment* but as health of the soul, survival of the soul and eternal life (31, 7–25). This is said by Averroes in his own name.

[23] Then he adds that *according to Plato* the guardians must not be afraid of anything which might happen to them after death. [i.e., there must not be presentations of hell as little as of demons and of the devil]. Then he says *in his own name* that "songs of women" like those implying that evil befell a friend through death must be rejected, and that fear should not be ascribed to *prophets* (31, 26–32, 9). Then he reports these opinions of *Plato*: a. much laughter should not be ascribed to *blessed men* [there is no danger that prophets be presented as given to laughter as distinguished from fear, to say nothing of weeping] (32, 7–8) and b. that the guardians must be most eager for truth – for lying does not befit God's rulership nor the angels [cf. opp. cit. ad 32, 14]<sup>24</sup> nor the vulgar whereas

<sup>23</sup> "led" is inserted by hand.

<sup>24</sup> "31" is crossed out and "32" inserted by hand.



the kings may lie to the vulgar, for *untrue tales are necessary in teaching the citizens*, and there is no bringer of a *nomos* who does not use fictitious stories since they are necessary for the happiness of the vulgar [the vulgar not knowing true happiness] (32, 12–22). Averroes says in a disguised way in his own name what {11} he makes Plato say explicitly; for if the *sharia* represents true happiness by imaginary happiness and the first principles by political principles, the bringer of the *sharia* must use fictitious stories.

[24] (Averroes says “lying does not befit God’s rulership” – God is not a ruler; but let us assume that God is a ruler – human rulers must lie because their subjects do not understand the true reasons of the actions demanded by them; yet the distance between God and the most intelligent human beings is infinitely greater than the distance between the most intelligent human rulers and their human subjects; hence if God is a ruler, he *must* lie – or if he does not lie he is not a ruler – cf. the implication of *Republic* II). Above all, Averroes does not criticize Plato’s proposition regarding noble lies or untrue fables – he does not make an *explicit* reservation on behalf of the *sharia* (as distinguished from the *nomos*); furthermore, the rulers in the best regime are the philosophers; hence the philosophers may lie to the multitude – or is this superfluous in the inferior regimes? Either Islam is the best regime then the philosophers must lie; or Islam is an inferior regime then the philosophers must lie for another reason – 64, 23–27: the dangerous situation of the philosophers.

[25] Plato’s discussion of poetry: frequent application to the censure of Arabic poetry (32, 24; 33, 3; 34, 18) – cf. esp. 34, 13–14: the emphasis on *Averroes’s* criticizing Arabic poets; next the demand for *paintings* of virtuous men: almost explicitly in Averroes’s own name (34, 21–29); this leads to 35, 11–12 & 19–20: explicit criticism of “our time” by the standard of Plato’s time (and not of early Islam) in regard to music.

[26] {12} Averroes *in his own name*: the virtuous city does not need the art of the judges, i.e., *fiqh*, at all; only bad cities need it; this is explicitly applied to “the cities of today” and allusively to “our time and the past” (37, 9–19). cf. 47, 4–28: particular or detailed laws are undesirable; many bringers of *nomoi* and *shariai* erred in this respect.

[27] Plato: the details regarding temples, prayers, etc. are to be determined by *prophecy*; this sort of things occur in all *nomoi* and *shariai*. [*This is the superhuman part of the sharia* (cf. 26, 16–18) – but not only of *this sharia* but of every *nomos* as well.]

[28] *Rule of philosophers* 81, 1–8 if “the first” is not available [and only then], obedience to his laws → *fiqh* → sep[eration] of political government and lawyers as it exists in many Muslim countries.

[29] *The problem of the exposure of infants and suicide*. People born with incurable defects which make them unfit for being useful to the city or people having become incurably unfit for the city: should they be killed (or kill themselves) as *Plato* says? Averroes knows that the issue is controversial; his decision is obscure (37, 20–38, 18).

[30] Averroes *in his own name no private property for the guardians*; “these cities” condemned with the view to this principle (41, 17–24; 42, 9 & 19–23) – no private property for *anyone* (43, 1–14) → 49, 1–7: manliness (and education in music and gymnastics) required of the *whole* vulgar – but: 49, 14 ff. – but: 60, 7–12.

[31] *Rule of philosophers* (48, 14–29).

[32] *Equality of the sexes*, esp. regarding war, government and {13} wisdom (52, 30–54, 20; esp. 53, 22–23) criticism of “some of the torot” and of<sup>25</sup> “these cities” with a<sup>26</sup> view to this principle (53, 24–26 & 54, 6–13).

[33] Difference between *the sharia* and the *shariai* or *nomoi* as well as *Plato* regarding intercourse or procreation is irrelevant (54, 21–26) – the women common to all men, this is different from “these cities” (55, 9–13).

[34] Incest between brothers and sisters, allusion to contrast to *sharia* (56, 11–12 & 16).

[35] *Absolute communism* is<sup>27</sup> *Plato*’s view (57, 4) (but no<sup>28</sup> criticism of it) but *Plato proves* this view (57, 5; 57, 23–58, 14) → Averroes<sup>29</sup> accepts it as evidently sound *in his own name*. In this context he accepts the perpetually fixed number of citizens of the virtuous city without any polemics (56, 23). cf. 57, 6: many virtuous cities side by side. cf. 79, 24–25.

[36] *Second Treatise*

[37] Averroes *in his own name*: philosopher =<sup>30</sup> bringer of *sharia* (60, 22 & 24; 61, 11), i.e., no excess of *sharia* beyond reason and nature. It is left open whether the bringer of *sharia* must be a prophet (61, 17–19). Since rhetoric and practical science is implied in philosophy (61, 1–4), “prophet” can refer only to knowledge of the future (cf. 41, 1) or to details regarding prayers, sacrifices, etc. (47, 26).

<sup>25</sup> “of” is inserted by hand.

<sup>26</sup> “the” is crossed out and “a” is inserted by hand.

<sup>27</sup> “in” is crossed out and “is” inserted by hand.

<sup>28</sup> “no” is inserted by hand.

<sup>29</sup> “Aristotle” is crossed out and “Averroes” inserted by hand.

<sup>30</sup> “=” is inserted by hand.

[38] The difficulty: is there no vicious circle? virtuous city *presupposes* perfect philosophers who have been brought up within the virtuous city! No, perfect philosophers may choose that common law which no nation can help choosing and the peculiar {14} torot of the philosophers may not differ greatly from the human torot under which they live; under these conditions wisdom can be completed within the lifetime of the philosophers in question; these conditions are fulfilled in our time and in our torot. If the philosophers would rule for an *infinite* time (cf. 78, 26–29), the best regime would emerge (62, 25–63, 5).

[39] [1. Islam is a human torah not greatly different from the private torah of the philosophers; at the very least there is no significant excess of Islam over merely human laws (cf. 47, 24–28).

[40] 2. Private torot of philosophers essentially<sup>31</sup> different from the human torot.

[41] 3. “common law” =<sup>32</sup> minimum conditions of society ≠<sup>33</sup> human torot ≠<sup>34</sup> private torah of the philosophers (cf. my essay on Cuzari).<sup>35</sup>

[42] 4. best regime not in existence now nor was it ever in existence under Islam at any rate. cf. “now” נתון<sup>36</sup> in 63, 8 & 26.]

<sup>31</sup> “assertedly” is crossed out and “essentially” inserted by hand.

<sup>32</sup> “=” is inserted by hand.

<sup>33</sup> “≠” is inserted by hand.

<sup>34</sup> “≠” is inserted by hand.

<sup>35</sup> Strauss, “The Law of Reason in The Kuzari.”

<sup>36</sup> “נתון” is inserted by hand.